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THE BIG NO/CONFERENCE

NONPOLITICS NO, NON-LARUELLE, NON-PHILOSOPHY, NON-POLITICS

What does "no" say? Who and what says "no?"

No's eruptive force transforms the argumentative landscape. From two-year old children to mature nation-states, the interruptive immediacy of naysaying can occur at surprising and inconvenient moments. The ability to refuse emerges early and maintains its appeal and power. In cultures of capitalist consumption, "no" has the power to defend and upend assumptions of order and propriety. From Thoreau to Gandhi to Marcuse, the will to nothing has provided a source of individual and collective creation.

Refusals dramatically reshape politics, nationhood, sovereignty, and land. Twice over the past 75 years the Greeks have famously declared their own version of No, "OXI"; the Brexiters aimed to withdraw from the European Union without proposing an alternative; Native Americans from across the continent have come together against DAPL in a collective refusal. The contexts of "No" involve political, economic, even physical risks, making naysaying an often difficult and complex act.

"No" can be a language of protest and overcoming. Its power operates across lines of disciplines and ideology, across modes of writing and the refusal to write. Negation can resist or avoid authority, or can identify and highlight forces which insist on forms of complicity and agreement. The lines between different forms—the conservative "no," the creative "no," the "no" of the striker or dissident—deny the clarity of lines of ideology or identity. "No" also brings about its own failures and dangers: of inaction, of regret, of retribution.

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